30

POL 14 VIETS

Department of State TELEGRAM

793

LIMITED OFFICI L USE

R

Saigon 2431 8-5-67

PAGE 01 SAIGON 02431 0507597

11
ACTION EA 19

INFO NEA 19,SAL 01,GPM 03,SC 01,RSC 01,USIA 12,H 02,NSC 10,NSA 02,

L 03,INR 07,P 04,CIA 04,DOD 01,SP 02,SS 35,AID 30,RSR 01,/157 W

R 050650Z AUG 67 ZFF KATHMANDU
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4094
INFO CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2094
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3688
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 110

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Jacobs DATE 10/5/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAIGON 2431

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

KATHMANDU FOR AMB BUNKER

REF: SAIGON 2393 - POL 14 VIETS

SUBJECT: AUGUST 4 RADIO TALKS BY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

1. ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST 4 PRESIDENTIAL SLATES ONE, THREE, SEVEN AND TEN GAVE TEN-MINUTE TALKS OVER THE NATIONAL RADIO. SLATE ONE, SUU-DAN, USED THEIR RADIO TIME BY READING RAPIDLY THE BIOGRAPHIES OF THE TWO CANDIDATES AND EXCERPTS FROM THEIR CAMPAIGN PLATFORM (SAIGON 2348). VU HONG KHANH DEVOTED HIS ENTIRE TEN MINUTES TO A RECITAL OF HIS LIFE

(1)

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 2431 C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
HISTORY AS A REVOLUTIONARY.

2. HOANG CO BINH CALLED ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE NATION,

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

DECLASSIFIED

STRESSING POLITICAL DIVISIONS, LACK OF SECURITY, AND ECONOMIC DISRUPTION. HE ATTACKED THE CONSTITUTION AS "UNBALANCED" AND SAID THAT ITS PROVISIONS CANNOT BE CONSIDERED ADEQUATE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR REBUILDING THE NATION. HE CALLED FOR AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION BUT DID NOT SPECIFY WHAT CHANGES HE THINKS SHOULD BE MADE.

3. TRAN VAN LY EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE APPROACHING ELECTION AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PEOPLE TO SELECT THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT. HE NOTED THAT THE COUNTRY IS THREATENED BY DIVISIONS AND CORRUPTION, BUT SUGGESTED NO SPECIFIC REMEDIES. HE PROMISED TO ANNOUNCE HIS PLATFORM IN THE NEXT BROADCAST.

4. COMMENT: THE PROGRAM WAS WELL PRESENTED TECHNICALLY IN PRIME EVENING LISTENING TIME. MOST EFFECTIVE SPEAKER WAS PROBABLY HOANG CO BINH. SUU'S PRESENTATION WAS READ MACHINE-GUN STYLE AND PROBABLY WAS NOT VERY EFFECTIVE IN FIXING ANY IDEAS IN THE MINDS OF THE AUDIENCE.

LOCKE

DECLASSIFIED

ORIGIN/ACTION

EA-8

RM/R	RMP	AF
ARA	EUR	FE
NEA	CU 3	INR 5
E	P 2	IO 5
L	FBO	AID 12
AGR	COM 3	FRB
INT	LAB	TAR
TR	XMB	AIR 5
ARMY 3	CIA 26	NAVY 5
OSD 33	USIA 10	NSA 3
		USC 6

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

FOR RM USE ONLY

A-104 CONFIDENTIAL

NO. HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO: DA NANG
BANGKOK
VIENTIANE
CINCPAC

FROM : Amembassy SAIGON DATE: August 6, 1967

SUBJECT : Youth and Students and the Elections

REF : Saigon 28123, June 14, 1967

Summary

Vietnamese youth and student leaders regard the coming elections in Viet-Nam as extremely important to the country's future. They are concerned that the elections be conducted freely and fairly. In the light of past experiences with GVN-conducted elections and in view of their current poor relations with the GVN, they are suspicious of the government's willingness to conduct proper elections. Some moderate youth groups are trying to organize to monitor and police the elections; most student groups will not take part in this action but say they are holding themselves ready to "protest" (in an unspecified manner) if the elections turn out to be rigged. Our present estimate is that the government can control any internal pressures which the students might generate; however, the students are probably capable of a protest which could attract enough attention here and abroad to detract from the new government's claim to a popular mandate.

Background

Although youth-student relations with any government, and especially a military government, are never close, GVN relations with Vietnamese youth and students during spring and summer 1966 were, in retrospect, not bad. Young and dynamic Youth and Sports Commissioner Vo Long Trieu was in office, surrounded by a strong team and encouraging such private youth initiaves as the District 8 New Life

COPYFLO-PBR

CONFIDENTIAL

FORM 4-62 DS-323

FOR DEPT. USE ONLY ☐ In ☐ Out

Drafted by: POL:LHHydle:djw 8/6/67

Contents and Classification Approved by: POL:JACalhoun

Clearances: POL:TJCHeavner (in draft) TMRecknagel (in draft)

DECLASSIFIED

Development Program and the formation of the National Youth Commission (NYC) an autonomous federation of 26 private youth groups. The Struggle had won the support of some Saigon University students but alienated many others with pressure tactics such as the kidnapping of SSU President To lai Chanh. Buddhist Association Youth Commissioner Thich Thien Minh's accusations that the students were accepting bribes from the government also turned some youth away from the Struggle. Most students welcomed the restoration of order by the GVN. The 1966 summer youth program sent more students out to the provinces with more cooperation from the government than the year before. The successful Constituent Assembly elections in September generally pleased the youth and students who had not paid much attention to the campaign but who began to see the Assembly as a step toward a constitutional and civilian regime.

The current decline in GVN-youth relations began in October 1966 because of the Cabinet crisis over the alleged Northern regionalist tendencies and police-state actions of the GVN. The Interim Committee of the Saigon Students Union issued a statement in support of Economy and Finance Commissioner-General Au truong Thanh (a former professer at the Faculty of Law) and against National Police Director-General Nguyen ngoc Loan. The statement supported the criticisms made by the Southern cabinet members and singled out Ky as the man responsible for the GVN's actions. The resignations of Vo long Trieu and Education Commissioner Nguyen van Truong in November 1966 deprived the GVN of two excellent spokesmen in youth circles.

In the political atmosphere of the time it was difficult for Ky to get Southerners to replace Trieu and Truong: he finally picked RVNAF Quartermaster Directorate Chief (and fellow member of the Thu Duc Nam Dinh 1952 Alumni Association) Col. Ho van di Hinh as Youth Commissioner and Dr. Nguyen van Tho, a dentist and former Diemist official and Can Lao, as Education Commissioner. Tho picked 54-year old Boy Scout leader Mai ngoc Lieu as his Special Assistant on Youth; Hinh named Huynh van Diep, also a former Diemist, Can Lao, and Boy Scout leader, as Cabinet Director and turned over most of the decisions to him.

Dr. Tho moved rapidly to restore and increase the GVN's and his own direct control over private youth groups. He restored the temporarily moribund Summer Youth Program but managed over several months to take away its autonomy and centralize its leadership under Lieu in the Education Department. In April he further strengthened his control over the Education Department by summarily and without explanation firing Director of Youth Activities Huynh phu Hanh, a young teacher and long-time Voluntary Youth Association leader.

DECLASSIFIED

Meanwhile, Youth Cabinet Director Diep made several moves which the NYC interpreted as politically motivated interference in private youth group affairs. The NYC fears that the government is trying to reduce its relative autonomy. When Mrs. Pauline Tho (the Education Commissioner's wife) was defeated for reelection as Chairman of the Girl Guides in 1966, the International Girl Guides accepted the new leadership. Mrs. Tho refused to accept defeat, however, and the Youth Department, after some waffling, then refused to recognize anyone as the leader of the Girl Guides. The Youth Department also put considerable money into the Boy Scouts (a member organization of the NYC) with the apparent intent of strengthening the Tho-Lieu-Hiep faction within it, and thus drawing it closer to the government and out of the NYC orbit. The Youth Department also refused to fund a number of NYC programs.

Beginning at about the time of Dr. Nguyen huu Chi's appointment as Assistant to the Prime Minister for Public Relations in February, Premier Ky took renewed interest in youth as a potential force to support GVN policies and his own Presidential ambitions. In March, during the Saigon visit of USUN Ambassador Goldberg and before the Guam Conference, a number of youth and student groups were encouraged by the GVN to demonstrate against the "false peace" proposals of Belgian Cardinal Cardijn, President de Gaulle, and others. The demonstrations were organized by judo instructor, would-be Youth Minister and Progressive Youth Group leader Pham Loi. The Progressive Youth Group is also a member of the NYC.

More explicitly linked with Ky's personal ambitions was the Viet-Nam United Youth Force, presented to the public in a June 11 ceremony over which he presided. The Youth Department reportedly contributed 1.6 million piasters to the founding of the VUYF; Duong hong Duyet (brother of Ky's Assistant for Public Administration Col. Duong hong Tuan) is Commissioner-General and Pham Loi is Secretary-General of the VUYF; Dr. Tho, Dr. Ng Huu Chi, and Pham Loi reportedly were instrumental in rounding up participants for the inauguration rally, although total attendance fell far short of the announced 10,000. The aims of the VUYF (reftel) were clearly competitive to those of the NYC. Since Pham Loi himself has little prestige in youth circles, and since the rally was so obviously a premature Ky campaign effort, none of the major reputable private youth groups took part.

Shortly after the rally, National Youth Commission President Tran ngoc Bau wrote an angry letter to the Youth Department complaining about the continuing GVN interference in private youth affairs as exemplified in its intervention in Girl Guides matters, its support of the VUYF, and its failure to give any support to NYC programs. The Youth Department responded with a pre-dated letter announcing a grant of 300,000 piasters to

the NYC for its projects. The paper work for the grant was not completed until three weeks later, however. It was at about this time that the able Director of Planning of the Youth Department, Hoang ngoc Tue, resigned in disgust not only at Youth Department policy but at what he later described to an Embassy officer as the ignorance and stupidity of Cabinet Director Diep.

The Youth Committee to Build Democracy

Aside from their concern about GVN intervention i. youth affairs, leaders of the NYC viewed the VUYF rally as further evidence of a Ky effort to rig the election. On June 18, 24 young leaders linked with the NYC and other private youth groups met in their private capacities and formed a Youth Committee to Build Democracy (Uy Ban Thanh Nien Xay Dung Dan Chu) which issued an open letter to Vietnamese youth. The letter underlined the importance of the elections as a "rare opportunity to exercise our rights to end this war, to eradicate graft, corruption and factional dissensions with the view of healing our wounds, rebuilding our war-torn country and crowning glory to our nation." The Committee insisted that the previous experience of electoral fraud (under Diem) must not be repeated and announced the Committee's three aims:

"1) - to demand that our government organize free and honest elections

"2) - to appeal to all our compatriots to enthusiastically participate in the coming elections so that through democratic processes our trust in our government will be restored and our national prestige will be enhanced.

"3) - to urge all deserving citizens of exemplary conduct to run as candidates, especially Vietnamese young men who meet the conditions prescribed by the electoral law.

"We earnestly appeal to the Vietnamese youth in all walks of life... to join us in our common struggle for honesty, justice, and democracy."

On the same day the Committee sent a cable to the Korean National Students Association expressing "full support" for their "just struggle against unfair May election." On June 20 NYC President Bau and YCBD Secretary-General Huynh Phu Hanh were among eight leaders of political and social groups who issued a declaration demanding freedom of expression and energetic GVN action against electoral fraud.

To carry out the third point of their June 18 letter the NYC apparently tried to organize "youth" slate for the Senatorial elections. They failed because, as Bau later put it, "they were too honest and tried to get ten good men instead of five or six good men and four or five just to fill in." Hoang ngoc

Tue added that most youth leaders lack the money and/or renown to have any chance of winning in the congested Senate race. Tran ngoc Bau himself joined the "Peace and Prosperity" List (#30) headed by Nguyen van Truong and Vo long Trieu, backed by the Southern Renaissance Movement, and linked with the Presidential candidacy of Tran van Huong.

There was a meeting July 2 at NYC headquarters, to which all major student and youth groups were invited, to pursue the aims of the YCBD's June 18 letter. In addition to NYC leaders the Confederation of Catholic University Students in Viet-Nam was represented and signed the final "Communique of the Committee Promoting the Creation of Youth Movement to Fight for a Free and Honest Election." The communique underlined the importance of the election in deciding the fate of Viet-Nam and declared that Vietnamese youth have the mission to "fight for the establishment of righteous rules and regulations for democracy." It noted that the total of 18 presidential and 64 Upper House lists filing for candidacy would "create a chaotic situation during the election campaign and on the voting day." Most pointed of all was the comment that "a ticket composed of the incumbent Chief of State and the incumbent Chief of the Government, within the present historical environment, will breed suspicion as to the impartiality of the organization of the election." (underlining in the original). The communique also observed that past experiences enable one to foresee "several dishonest schemes which will be practiced during the election campaign and voting time."

The resolution in the communique urged all youth, university and high school student organizations to unite to form a "Youth Movement to Fight for an Honest and Free Election" which would organize a project aiming at "a) demanding a very honest, impartial and fair organization of the election and at the same time mobilize the people to participate in the election intelligently, b) controlling the election campaign, the casting of votes, and denouncing to national and world opinion the rigging practices, if any." The communique called on all youth and student organizations to send representatives to a further meeting July 16 to organize the movement.

The University Students

Following the split of the Saigon Student Union during the Struggle in May 1966 SSU affairs had been put in the hands of an interim committee headed by Secretary-General Nguyen tan Thiet. The committee was supposed to organize a new election of a new Executive Committee but disagreements among the representatives of the student groups of the 14 faculties and higher schools of Saigon University over the method of election delayed a resolution of the matter until April 30, 1967, when a new Executive Committee headed by Teachers' College representative Ho huu Nhut was voted in.

Despite an inauspicious post-election dinner at which winning and losing slates reportedly ended up in a brawl, and despite the relatively weak personality of Nhut, the SSU soon began to flex its muscles and demonstrate

DECLASSIFIED

its suspicion of the GVN in general and National Police Director-General Loan in particular. They met with the Van Hanh Students Union and talked about forming a national university students organization. In May they protested against the kidnap-murder of two students at the Buddhist School of Social Service in a way which implied either that the police were to blame for not protecting the students, or that perhaps the government itself was behind the attack. In early June they protested the arrest of writer Vu Hanh as a blow to freedom of speech, and implied doubt of the police evidence of his VC connections. On June 30, Nhut stated at a press conference that if the coming elections were rigged the students would protest against it as the Korean students had done. However, the SSU did not respond to the NYC's call to unite to set up a movement on free and fair elections, nor did the student unions of Van Hanh, Can Tho or Da Lat Universities (Hue University has been without a Student Union since the Struggle).

Recent Developments

The period from about July 7 to July 25 saw considerable tension in GVN youth relations.

On July 8 the Saigon Law Faculty Students Group issued "Declaration No. 1" on the presidential and senatorial election. The declaration cited Constitutional and electoral law provisions which in the author's view supported the right of Gen. Minh to return home and run for President, the right of Au truong Thanh to defend himself against police efforts to link him with Vu Hanh and other VC intellectuals, and the requirement that Thieu and Ky resign or request leave from their government positions during the pre-election period. The document did not mention any of the candidates by name, but the implications were clear. The declaration also demanded in general terms that equal facilities for campaigning be given to all candidates, and that freedom of expression be absolutely respected. On July 9 the whole Saigon Students Union followed the Law Students' lead in a similar declaration.

Also on July 9 the Youth Committee to Build Democracy issued a three-point declaration demanding 1) freedom of speech and press in the coming period, 2) resolution of the Minh-Lieng case in the spirit of "freedom to be candidates and to compete in the national election," and 3) the "elucidation" of the Thanh-Huyen case, in which the YCBD "protest against the disregard for due process of law to prosecute candidates with the attempt to eliminate them from the list of running candidates."

The government clearly regarded these activities as directed against itself. The Youth Department criticized two of its own officials who were among the 24 signers of the June 18 YCBD communique for "getting involved in politics." On July 13 the Political Bureau of the Youth Department, citing

DECLASSIFIED

"security reasons", ended the Cam Lo Refugee Workcamp in which youth leaders from the NYC, the Summer Youth Program, and other organizations were participating with assistance from the Youth Department, Special Refugee Commissariat, and CORDS. On the same day, the Special Branch of the National Police searched National Youth Commission headquarters, leaving police agents behind on NYC premises for several days, and effectively washing out the scheduled July 16 meeting to organize the movement to fight for free and honest elections.

On July 18 the Assembly rejected the Thanh and Minh candidacies and accepted the Thieu-Ky candidacy without requiring their resignation. Several students and youth leaders were in the crowded galleries watching the debate and votes, and they did not fail to notice the presence of Gen. Loan during the votes on Minh and Thieu-Ky.

During the next few days student and youth feeling ran high against the government, the Assembly decisions and the government "pressure" which supposedly produced the decisions. There was some talk of demonstrations, but the students and youth realized that demonstrations might be exploited by Viet Cong or extremist elements, and they feared that Ky and Loan would also welcome demonstrations as an excuse to declare a state of emergency and postpone elections.

The July 20 decree abolishing censorship eased the tension somewhat. The decree was welcomed by the SSU in a seminar jointly organized with the Vietnamese Journalists Association at SSU headquarters July 23. The SSU insisted, however, that the lifting of censorship should be permanent and not just for the campaign period. Police were actively checking ID cards outside the SSU headquarters during that seminar.

NYC Plan to Monitor the Election

On July 25 Huynh phu Hanh, Secretary-General of the Youth Committee to Build Democracy, called on an Embassy officer and presented him with a National Youth Commission plan to organize the youth into an independent organization for policing the election, explaining it to the people, and encouraging popular participation. The Embassy officer said that youth interest in the elections was a good thing but that an autonomous organization such as that envisioned by the committee might run into trouble with the government and fail in its objectives. He urged Hanh to offer the services of the Youth Committee to the Central Election Campaign Committee, an organization controlled by the candidates and responsible to the National Assembly, with similar objectives. After another meeting August 3 Hanh agreed with reluctance to take the idea back to his colleagues. He predicted the youth initiative would fail because of the bad will of the government and the military presidential ticket.

Current Youth and Student Political Attitudes

All youth and student leaders who have talked with US Mission officials in the past few weeks agree on the great importance of the coming elections in giving the people a choice. They agree that the choice must be as free and fair as possible, in order to enhance the legitimacy and prestige of the new government at home and abroad. Although views vary (see below) about the individual merits of Au truong Thanh and Duong van Minh, most youth and students think they should have been allowed to run for the sake of giving the people a wide choice and increasing the credibility of the results. They have not suggested that Thieu and Ky should not have been allowed to run, but they think that the two generals should take leave from their CVN posts in order to remove the suspicion that they wish to rig the election and to improve their credibility as representatives of Viet-Nam if they do win.

Attitudes toward individual candidates are mixed. There is a general preference for civilian rule. Au truong Thanh was regarded as an intelligent and firm man on the basis of his performance as Commissioner-General of Economy and Finance, but there is some fear that he might indeed be a VC. Duong van Minh is regarded as neither intelligent nor firm, but he was seen as the kind of symbol behind which the nation could unite. Phan khac Suu is generally regarded as old and feeble. Tran an Huong is probably the most popular of all because of his moral stature, his credentials as a professor (and therefore an intellectual), and because he stands the best chance to defeat Thieu and Ky. Huong is especially popular with the NYC group, some of whom are openly committed to campaign for him.

Feeling runs fairly strongly against Nguyen cao Ky, partly because of his habit of making authoritarian or ill-considered statements, and partly because of Gen. Loan's activities. Feeling about Thieu is not strong either way, but some youth are impressed by his intelligence, and the NYC people in particular are quite willing to work for him in a national union government if he should be fairly elected.

In general the NYC people are loyal oppositionists who want the building of democracy to continue, and who want a sensible government which pays attention to their technocratic prescriptions for the country's ills. The SSU, the Buddhist Student Association, and the VHSU (Van Hanh Students Union) are less firmly committed to the evolutionary growth of the present South Vietnamese constitutional and democratic system, and more willing to consider street demonstrations in case of a temporary setback. If there were an obviously rigged election which produced general indignation, these students might provide shock troops and to some extent leadership for protests against it.

LOCKE